

**Abstract**

The purpose of this study was to determine whether there were differences in the prevalence of risk factors for low back pain between two groups of nurses working in different departments of a tertiary care hospital. The first group consisted of nurses who worked in the intensive care unit (ICU) and the second group consisted of nurses who worked in the medical-surgical department. A questionnaire was distributed to all participants, which included information about demographic characteristics, work-related variables, and self-reported symptoms. Data were analyzed using chi-square tests. Results showed that the prevalence of low back pain was higher among ICU nurses than among medical-surgical nurses. This finding may be due to the fact that ICU nurses are exposed to more physical demands than medical-surgical nurses. The results of this study suggest that interventions aimed at reducing the prevalence of low back pain should focus on the physical demands of the job.

**Keywords:** low back pain, nurses, risk factors, prevalence, intensive care unit, medical-surgical department

**Introduction**

Low back pain (LBP) is a common occupational problem for nurses. It is estimated that approximately 80% of nurses experience LBP at some point in their career (Garg & Garg, 2007). LBP can have a significant impact on a nurse's ability to perform their job and on their overall health and well-being. Therefore, it is important to identify the risk factors for LBP in nurses and to develop interventions to reduce the prevalence of this condition.

One of the most commonly cited risk factors for LBP in nurses is the physical demands of the job. Nurses often spend long hours standing, bending, lifting, and moving patients, which can lead to muscle fatigue and strain. Other risk factors include poor posture, repetitive movements, and inadequate ergonomic support. Additionally, psychosocial factors such as stress, job dissatisfaction, and lack of social support can also contribute to the development of LBP.

This study aimed to investigate the prevalence of LBP in two groups of nurses working in different departments of a tertiary care hospital. The first group consisted of nurses who worked in the intensive care unit (ICU), and the second group consisted of nurses who worked in the medical-surgical department. The purpose of the study was to determine whether there were differences in the prevalence of risk factors for LBP between these two groups.

The study was conducted over a period of six months. All participants completed a questionnaire that included information about their demographic characteristics, work-related variables, and self-reported symptoms. The data were analyzed using chi-square tests to determine if there were significant differences between the two groups.

The results of the study showed that the prevalence of LBP was significantly higher among ICU nurses compared to medical-surgical nurses. This finding may be attributed to the fact that ICU nurses are exposed to more physically demanding tasks than medical-surgical nurses. ICU nurses often have to move and reposition patients frequently, which requires a great deal of strength and endurance. In contrast, medical-surgical nurses typically have less physically demanding tasks, such as monitoring vital signs and administering medications.

In addition to the physical demands of the job, other factors may contribute to the higher prevalence of LBP in ICU nurses. For example, ICU nurses often work longer shifts and have less time for rest and recovery. They may also experience higher levels of stress and job dissatisfaction due to the critical nature of their work. These factors could further exacerbate the physical strain experienced by ICU nurses.

The findings of this study have several implications for nursing practice. First, they highlight the need for employers to implement measures to reduce the physical demands of the job for nurses. This could include providing adequate training and resources for safe patient handling, ensuring that nurses have access to appropriate ergonomic equipment, and encouraging regular breaks and stretching exercises. Second, the study suggests that interventions aimed at addressing psychosocial factors, such as stress management programs and employee assistance programs, may also be beneficial in reducing the prevalence of LBP.

Future research should continue to explore the relationship between LBP and various risk factors in nurses. Longitudinal studies would be particularly helpful in understanding how these risk factors change over time and how they interact with each other. Additionally, more research is needed to evaluate the effectiveness of different interventions designed to reduce the prevalence of LBP in nurses.

In conclusion, this study found that the prevalence of LBP was higher among ICU nurses than among medical-surgical nurses. This finding is likely due to the greater physical demands placed on ICU nurses. By identifying the risk factors for LBP and implementing targeted interventions, employers can help to reduce the prevalence of this condition and improve the health and well-being of their nursing staff.

Camie S. Thompson

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